



Credit: Hana López

Invasive Black Rat
Rattus rattus

THE PROBLEM: INVASIVE SPECIES

Invasive black rats, along with non-native goats, cats, and rhesus monkeys, have decimated the large seabird populations that once bred on the island, and destroyed many plants and animals. Cats and goats were successfully eradicated from the Island on 1987 and 2009 respectively, and the monkey removal efforts are in their final stages.

Rats were first reported and collected from Desecheo in 1912, at which time they were already abundant. The removal of introduced species from wildlife refuges is critical to the restoration of wildlife habitat and the protection of threatened species.



Credit: Island Conservation

American oystercatcher
Haematopus palliatus



Credit: USFWS

Green Iguana
Iguana iguana

INVASIVE SPECIES WITH HIGH RISK OF INTRODUCTION BY ACCIDENT DUE TO STOWAWAYS OR INTENTIONAL RELEASE

Cactus Moth
Cactoblastis cactorum

Cats
Felis catus

House Rat
Mus musculus

Norway Rat
Rattus norvegicus

Green Iguana
Iguana iguana

Cactus Mealybug
Hypogeococcus pungens

Dogs
Canis lupis familiaris

Mongoose
Herpestes auropunctatus

Black Rat
Rattus rattus

Other reptile spp.
e.g. *Anolis cristatellus*



THE SOLUTION: RAT REMOVAL

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in partnership with Island Conservation, are working together to remove invasive rats. With the island free of invasive species, native plants and animals will once again be able to thrive in their natural habitat.

Coral reefs in the Marine Reserve surrounding Desecheo (managed by the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources) are also expected to benefit from the Island's restoration; increased vegetation will reduce soil erosion into the sea, and the seabirds will provide valuable nutrients to the adjacent marine ecosystems.



Credit: Island Conservation



Credit: José Herrera

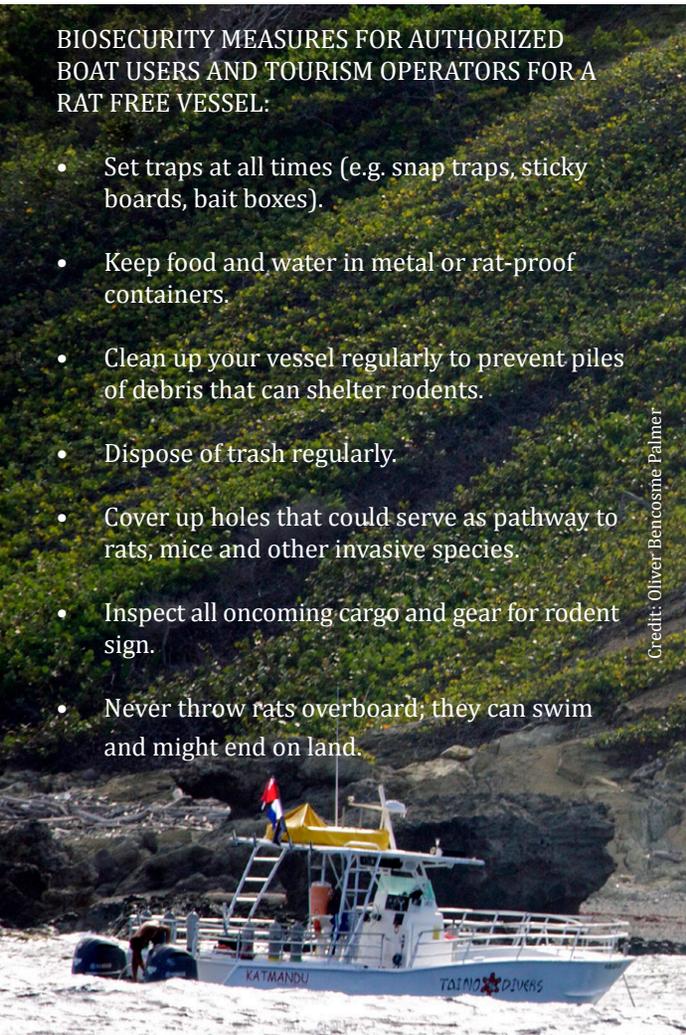
Invasive Black Rat
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HELP US PREVENT FUTURE INVASIONS!

BIOSECURITY MEASURES FOR AUTHORIZED BOAT USERS AND TOURISM OPERATORS FOR A RAT FREE VESSEL:

- Set traps at all times (e.g. snap traps, sticky boards, bait boxes).
- Keep food and water in metal or rat-proof containers.
- Clean up your vessel regularly to prevent piles of debris that can shelter rodents.
- Dispose of trash regularly.
- Cover up holes that could serve as pathway to rats, mice and other invasive species.
- Inspect all oncoming cargo and gear for rodent sign.
- Never throw rats overboard; they can swim and might end on land.

Credit: Oliver Bencosme Palmer



PROTECT DESECHEO'S WILDLIFE!

Don't let your boat be the one that accidentally releases this plague on the Island.

PROTECT YOUR HEALTH!

Rats, mice, and their fleas can transmit diseases including Hantavirus, salmonellosis, rat bite fever and even plague.

Rodents cause unsanitary conditions; they leave about 50 droppings a day and spread urine to mark territory. In addition, rodents usually die in cramped, dark places producing noxious smells.

WE CAN HELP!



Illustration: Cynthia Gotay

To get free traps/bait boxes or report any sightings/suspicious of animals escaping or being released into Desecheo, please contact:

Caribbean Islands National Wildlife Refuges

(787)-851-7258/7274

For more information of the Desecheo Biosecurity Plan

www.fws.gov/caribbean/refuges/desecheo

Thank you for your collaboration in this program; your efforts will ensure that Desecheo remains an important sanctuary for its native and endemic biodiversity!



DESECHEO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE RESTORING WILDLIFE HABITAT

Desecheo is a small, uninhabited island located approximately 13 miles west of Puerto Rico. In 1976, Desecheo was transferred to the US Fish and Wildlife Service to protect seabird colonies. Historically, Desecheo Island was a major seabird rookery and it may have had the largest brown booby colony in the world. The loss of nesting seabirds on the island has been linked to the presence of introduced predators, including invasive black rats.

IMPORTANCE OF DESECHEO ISLAND

In addition to sea birds, Desecheo provides habitat for three species of endemic reptiles, three endemic arachnids, and the endemic and endangered cactus known as higo chumbo. The island supports subtropical dry forest, a habitat type that is endangered on the mainland of Puerto Rico and in other subtropical areas.

Credit: Island Conservation



Desecheo Ameiva
Ameiva desecheensis



Credit: Island Conservation